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### Journal Item

#### How to cite:

Wilks, Linda (2016). Communicating an arts foundation's values: sights, sounds and social media. Arts and the Market, 6(2) pp. 206–223.

For guidance on citations see [FAQs](#).

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Version: Accepted Manuscript

Link(s) to article on publisher's website:

<http://dx.doi.org/doi:10.1108/AAM-08-2015-0014>

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## Communicating an arts foundation's values: sights, sounds and social media

DOI: 10.1108/AAM-08-2015-0014

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### Acknowledgments:

I would like to thank Helen Meissner of the Folkstock Arts Foundation for all her help and support with this study.

### Biographical Details:

Dr. Linda Wilks has published research on the social and cultural dimensions of events. She is particularly interested in music festivals and has studied social and cultural capital, volunteering, serious leisure, race and ethnicity, and marketing within this context. She has published articles in key journals and edited collections, as well as co-edited the book 'Exploring the social impacts of events' (Routledge, 2013).

### Structured Abstract:

#### Purpose

This paper tests and refines the long-established signal transmission model of the communication process by examining the ways in which a newly-formed nonprofit arts foundation communicated its professed values to its stakeholders.

#### Methodological approach

The study uses a mixed method case study approach. Interviews with key informants and observations of the foundation's webpages enabled the identification of the professed values of the arts foundation. Next, a questionnaire survey established whether these values had been successfully decoded by stakeholders and identified the channels via which the values-related signals had been received.

#### Findings

The transmission model was found to be relevant as a model. However, to improve its fit within a nonprofit arts context, a modification to the model is suggested which highlights the importance of multi-sensory channels, the importance of context, and the increasingly important role of the stakeholder.

#### Research limitations

This study is a small-scale case study, although its mixed methods help to ensure validity.

#### Practical implications

The findings will help nonprofit arts organisations to decide on how to best communicate their values to their stakeholders.

#### Social implications

A determination by an organisation to uphold an uplifting range of values, such as those which were found to be transmitted by Folkstock, impacts upon society by the potential contribution to a better quality of life.

#### Originality /value

Literature which provides in-depth examination of the communication of values within a nonprofit arts context via a range of channels, including traditional, online and multi-sensory, is sparse. The opportunity to study a newly-formed nonprofit arts organisation is also rare. The results of this study provide valuable evidence that even in today's social media-rich world, people, sounds, sights and material objects in physical space still have a vital role to play in the communication of values.

**Keywords:** nonprofit; communication, events; social media; arts; branding

**Article Classification:** Research paper

## Introduction

This paper tests and refines the classic signal transmission model of the communication process, first proposed by Shannon and Weaver (1949). Kotler *et al.*'s (2013) more recent version of the model is used as a starting point to frame the presentation of data drawn from a case study of how the Folkstock Arts Foundation communicated its professed values during the first few months of its life. Analysis of the data leads to a further suggested modification of the transmission model, to make it particularly relevant to a nonprofit arts context.

This study aims to build on the suggestion made by Wilks (2013) that, as part of a communications strategy, it is important for an arts organisation to identify its values and to decide on how to communicate them effectively to its stakeholders. According to Rokeach (1968: 550), 'values have to do with modes of conduct and end-states of existence. ... It is a standard that tells us how to act or what to want. ... A standard we employ to justify behaviour. ... If you claim to have a value and you do not want to influence everyone else under the sun to have too, the chances are it is not a value.' Building on this definition, Malbasic *et al* (2015) explains that the personal values of the people within organisations shape the values of the organisation. Stakeholders, to whom the values need to be communicated, are those persons or groups who can influence the organisation, or are influenced by it (Getz, 2012) and may include event attendees, suppliers, volunteers, investors, sponsors, media, and national and local government (Bladen *et al*, 2012).

Voss and Grabel (2014) link branding, organisational identity and values, asserting that an organisation's values should be enduring, intrinsic to the brand, and guide and drive the organisation. Voss *et al* (2000) suggest that most organisations have a constellation of values, with some values dominating. Stride (2006) also argues that a clearer understanding of the relationship of values to branding is needed and asserts that values are integral to nonprofit organisations. She suggests that the organisation needs to be explicit and remain faithful to these in order to build trust with their stakeholders.

Indication that the context of a nonprofit arts organisation may need special consideration when considering communication, is indicated by Hall's (1975) assertion that the encoding and decoding of messages always have a social and cultural context. Meanwhile Finnegan's (2014) reminder of the communicative role of sounds, sights and material objects in physical space, a role which is not included in the classic communication model, is particularly worth noting for the promise it shows of being particularly relevant to an arts environment.

Literature on the processes by which nonprofit arts organisations communicate their values via a range of channels, including traditional, online and multi-sensory, is sparse. Case studies of newly-formed nonprofit arts organisation are also rare. Baumgarth and O'Reilly (2014) highlight the importance for arts and culture of considering the concept of brand management and point out that it is a relatively new and neglected concept within this context. This paper aims to fill these gaps by using a mixed method study of the Folkstock Arts Foundation to test the transmissions model and arrive at a tailored communications model which will contribute to nonprofit arts branding discourse.

### **Literature review**

The arts marketing communications literature, has tended to focus on the overarching marketing strategies which organisations use to promote the outputs of the arts: that is artistic products, experiences and events (Hede and Kellett, 2011, Hill *et al.*, 2003, Hoyle, 2002, Masterman and Wood, 2006). Event management literature includes consideration of branding, with key texts by Bladen *et al* (2012), Yeoman *et al* (2004) and Hoyle (2002) taking their lead from the classic for-profit marketing management literature with talk of an event's brand image, logos, and differentiation from competing brands. However, many arts organisations and artists resist a marketing orientation, seeing it as adding an undesirable commercial layer to the intrinsic value of the arts (Brown, 2015, Major, 2014, Thomas *et al.*, 2009).

Similarly, although there has been some specific consideration of the role of branding for arts organisations (Jyrämä *et al.*, 2015, O'Sullivan, 2007), there is also resistance to the idea of branding being adopted by the nonprofit sector due to a perceived potential mismatch between the commercial and nonprofit sectors (Stride, 2006). O'Reilly (2011) also acknowledges the tensions between a commercial approach to branding and the resistance that some artists feel to their work being treated as a 'brand'. He explains that branding was originally designed to talk about things (products), making it difficult to apply within arts contexts, such as films and events.

Rather than taking the lead from for-profit marketing theory, O'Reilly (2011) believes that the inclusion of the consideration of ideologies and values relating to the arts project is a more appropriate approach. Also taking a different tack is Getz's (2012) suggestion that arts events are animators, or catalysts, which can make places such as museums and heritage sites come alive with sensory stimulation. So it is not the events themselves which are branded, but

events which have the effect of shaping the brand image of the host community, be it a place or an arts facility. Richards and Palmer (2010), for example, explore the role of events in city branding; while Rentschler *et al* (2014) studies how an art museum uses a blockbuster exhibition to enhance its brand. The authors point out that blockbuster branding also provides the artist with an opportunity to enhance their personal brand. Personal branding, sometimes equated with reputation and possibly bolstered with discourse on an artist's values and beliefs, is seen as important in the art world, according to Kottasz and Bennett (2014).

Voss *et al* (2000) provide a useful account of organisational values in the nonprofit professional theatre industry, dividing them into five value dimensions: prosocial, artistic, financial, market and achievement. While stressing the relevance of organisational values to the management of nonprofit cultural firms, they also highlight the tensions caused by the pressure to be both artistic- and market-oriented. Looking at the issue of the values of the arts consumer, rather than the arts organisation, Thyne (2001) looks at the ways in which the values of museum visitors affect their experience and reasons to visit, concluding that museums should use this knowledge to position their offering. This would imply, however, that the museum is changing its values to fit in with the visitors' needs, an approach which could suggest that the museum's values are not strongly held.

As Moeran and Pedersen (2011) note, festivals and events provide a site for the negotiation and affirmation of the diverse range of values that pervade a particular field. Sharpe (2008) found that this could be problematic, however, as the community music festival she studied was dominated by those who already held the festival's 'alternative lifestyle' values, to which the organisers were hoping to convert 'mainstream' attendees. Woosnam *et al* (2009) also highlight the role of values in the decision to attend a festival, while Finkel (2010) warns of the problems of a festival claiming to adhere to a set of values, such as accessibility and social inclusivity, and then failing to demonstrate these values in action during the event.

Looking at the literature within the broader context of how other types of nonprofit organisation manage communication with their stakeholders is also useful background to this study. Michaelidou *et al* (2015) assert that nonprofit brand image plays an important role in shaping consumers' charitable donations. There has been particular recent interest in the role of social media in communication by nonprofits, with Lovejoy and Saxton (2012) claiming that the adoption of social media has engendered new paradigms of public engagement. Waters and Jamal (2011), however, warn that nonprofit organisations use predominantly one-

way messages to their stakeholders, despite the potential for dialogue on social networking sites. Meanwhile, Guo and Saxton (2014) also look at how nonprofit organisations communicate with stakeholders using the social media platform, Twitter. They found that Twitter is a particularly powerful tool for providing information, building community and for calls to action. However, they found that it was less useful for the direct communication of strategic or mission-related dimensions.

Other studies look more specifically at the communication channels used by event organisers. Although predating widespread social media and internet use, a good starting point is provided by Smith (2008) who matches the channels used by the organisers of two arts events in New Zealand to distribute information with the sources used by event attendees to find out about the events. Smith identifies multiple channels used by the organisers, including radio, local newspapers, flyers, brochures, printed programmes, banners, posters and branded vehicles to attract the attention of potential attendees. The organisers also identified word of mouth from previous visitors, participants and staff as being important channels, while attendees rated the event brochure as their most important source of information.

Hudson and Hudson (2013) also look at the ways in which attendees of music festivals make use of communications channels. Like Smith's study, Hudson and Hudson are concerned with how festival organisers influence the decisions to attend the event, rather than providing an in-depth look at the values-related content of the messages, however. Hudson and Hudson's study also highlights the difference that social media has made to the communications process by enabling messages to pass between attendees and back to the organisers more easily, enabling them to publicly proclaim their views about the event. Also of interest, Hudson *et al.*'s (2015) study of US music festival attendees links high social media use to a strong person-brand relationship, further suggesting that word of mouth advocacy would be more likely if the brand relationship is strong.

This review of the literature therefore suggests that the communication of values plays an important role in the image or branding of a nonprofit organisation. It also suggests that values may be communicated in a variety of ways, including through the multi-sensory channels expressed in an event. Further investigation is, however, deemed necessary to confirm and model this process within the nonprofit arts sector.

## Methodology

Various communication-related theories are used to frame this investigation of the Folkstock Arts Foundation's communication processes. According to Severin and Tankard (1997), the theory of signal transmission put forward by Shannon and Weaver (1949) is the most important contribution to today's thinking about the communication process. Although mathematical in its roots, Shannon and Weaver suggest that the theory is general enough to be applied to many communication modes, including written language, spoken word and music, as well as being about the procedures by which one mind might affect another.

Kotler *et al.*'s (2013) framework of elements in the communication process (see Figure 1) draws on the Shannon and Weaver model, adding in a feedback loop, which gives the receiver the potential to play an active role, and highlights the role of the media of the message. The content, structure and format of the organisation's message, as well as the channels via which the messages are transmitted, should all be considered, according to Kotler *et al.*

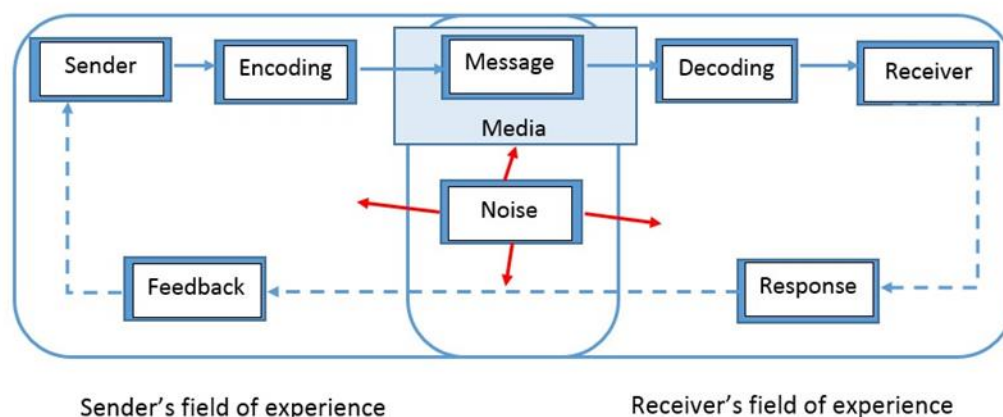


Figure 1: Elements in the communication process, based on Kotler et al. (2013: 423)

Further developing the conceptualisation of the circuit-based model of the communication process, Hall (1980) suggests that the elements of the model should be seen as separate and distinctive practices. He highlights how the form of the message is determined by the formal sub-rules of discourse, which are set within the context of the social relations of the communications system. The encoding of the message is also framed through meanings and ideas, and its decoding is dependent on its being appropriated as meaningful discourse. Hall hypothesises that a meaningful decoding does not follow on inevitably from an encoding, and

the degree of symmetry would depend on the extent to which the receiver is operating inside a similar structure of understanding or dominant code.

Although the message transmission model is a good starting point when considering communication, other dimensions should also be considered. Finnegan (2014) reminds us that communication is not only about words, images and digital media, but also about communicating using sounds, sights and material objects in physical space. Finnegan's approach emphasises embodied performance, human artefacts and multidimensional shared and active processes, rather than what she sees as the narrow view of the mechanistic transfer of messages on which the Shannon and Weaver model is based. Of particular relevance to this study, Finnegan highlights the multi-channel communications involved in musical performance.

Bringing in another useful framing angle for this study, Severin and Tankard (1997) highlight the importance of personal influence in influencing the communication process. They conclude that opinion leaders may communicate through the personification of values, as well as through the display of competence, but must be accessible to interested people to be effective in conveying the message.

This study uses the in-depth empirical inquiry of a mixed method case study (Yin, 2009) of the newly-formed Folkstock Arts Foundation in order to look at how a nonprofit arts organisation communicated its values in its early days. It should also be noted that Tsang (2013) confirms that case studies are useful for theory testing and falsification. The Folkstock Arts Foundation was set up in April 2013 and initially selected sixteen fledgling acoustic folk and roots musicians for intensive coaching and support. To aid these artists' exposure, as well as to enhance social benefit and local community bonds through developing the audience and appetite for new music, the Foundation presented several music events during 2013, including a one-day festival and a 'showcase' event in September.

Various methods were used in order to examine the multiple facets of the transmission model within the Folkstock context. As a starting point, thirteen Folkstock aims and values were taken from the Folkstock Arts Foundation's website and confirmed with the Director during an in-depth interview. An in-depth interview with the Foundation's chief blogger also helped to confirm the values that she was attempting to convey on behalf of the organisation. Two control values were also added which were not part of the Foundation's professed values: 'Promotes music from a wide range of genres' and 'High profile nationally', in order to



provide a check on response validity. Also interviewed and providing insight into the communications process was one of the artists, who ran the Foundation's Twitter account in the early days of its set-up.

A questionnaire-based survey of a range of the Foundation's stakeholders was carried out in order to find out whether stakeholders were successfully decoding the messages about its values, as well as to discover how the messages were received. If respondents decided that these two control values were not being communicated, this would indicate that the overall communication process was working effectively, thus indicating the reliability of the research methodology. The fifteen professed values were listed with a question which asked: 'This is what Folkstock is trying to achieve – please tell us whether you think each is being achieved or not.' A range of potential communication channels were next listed with the question: 'What do you think has caused you to have these opinions about Folkstock (choose as many as you need to)'.

The questionnaire was made available online throughout the month of September, with links provided from the Folkstock Facebook and Twitter accounts, as well as from the Folkstock blog. Printed questionnaires were also distributed and collected at the Folkstock Festival on the 21st September and at the Hertford Corn Exchange 'Folkstock Presents' event on the 6th of September. Respondents were asked to provide answers to eleven closed questions, then given the chance to provide qualitative input in a final open question on the questionnaire. A total of 108 usable responses were collected from a variety of stakeholders, including audience members, artists, festival stall holders, organising team members and stewards. The response rate for festival attendees, with around 1000 potential respondents, was around 10%, while for the Folkstock Presents event at the Hertford Corn Exchange, with around 60 attendees, the response rate was around 57%. Some of the respondents attended both events, and some also attended, or only attended, four other events, also produced by the Foundation during the earlier part of the year. The ages of the respondents were fairly evenly spread from 18 to over 60, 94% of the respondents classified themselves as white British, and 64% in the higher managerial/professional/higher supervisory employment categories. These categories seemed broadly to reflect the observable demographics of the attendees.

To gather further qualitative input, observations of whether the professed values were visibly in operation, were made at Folkstock music events. The ways in which the organisation was

represented via a range of social media, including Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, Instagram and Tumblr, was also examined, as well as the extent of coverage on these channels.

This mixed method approach does allow the examination of the situation from a variety of angles, thus increasing validity. However, it is acknowledged that more than one case study would overcome the potential limitations of using only one, as in this paper. This study was also small-scale and, although it provides useful insights, further case studies on a larger scale are therefore recommended.

## **Findings**

### ***The message***

At the centre of Kotler *et al*'s (2013) communication framework, and highlighted as key by Hall (1980) is the message. For this study, the messages being investigated were those which encode the core values which the Folkstock Arts Foundation was professing as its ethos.

The Folkstock values could be said to form clusters. One cluster of values emphasises inclusivity, stressing that a welcome is extended to people of all ages, ethnic backgrounds and income levels and that Folkstock aims to be family friendly. A further cluster, this set related to music, demonstrates that Folkstock emphasises acoustic folk and roots music, supports the local music scene, supports aspiring musicians, and aims to put on enjoyable events.

Folkstock's keenness to put down local roots are demonstrated in a cluster which stresses that it values the local music scene, that it desires to benefit local communities and that it wishes to be high profile locally (but not necessarily nationally). The final cluster of identified values explored within the survey take an affective stance: that is, relating to moods and feelings, stressing aspiration, highlighting a desire to be an inspiring organisation, and suggesting that Folkstock aims to help people to realise their dreams.

A list of these values was provided within the questionnaire and the respondents were asked whether they agreed, disagreed, or were not sure, that Folkstock was achieving the listed aims (see Figure 2).

Of note is the very high level of agreement by the respondents, that Folkstock's professed values are being decoded and received and are perceived to have been achieved at the time of the survey. The two control values appear in the bottom three of the values in terms of levels of agreement, suggesting that the respondents' level of agreement with these non-professed messages was much lower than the professed messages, which supports the validity of the

findings. However, there is a perception that the music is from a wider genre range than publicised: observation at the events does not confirm this. More surprising, was that the respondents also considered that Folkstock did not have a high profile locally. However, only 14% were sure of a low local profile, and 60% did feel that Folkstock was of benefit to local communities. Of the five values which had been decoded most effectively, four were related to music.

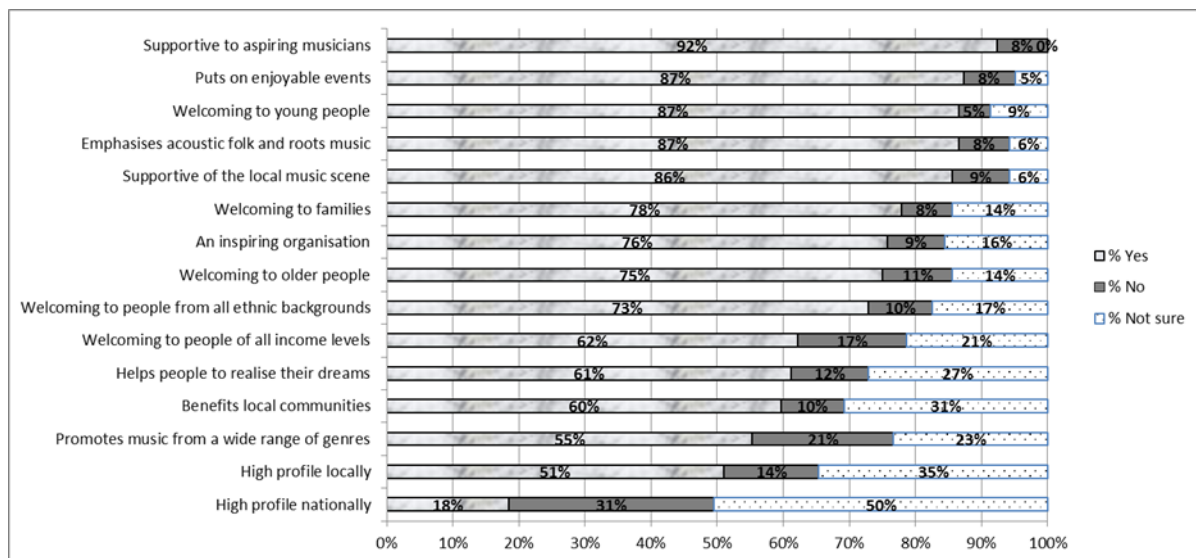


Figure 2. Views on which of the Foundation's values are being achieved (n=105)

Values received relating to inclusivity were generally around the middle of the table in terms of levels of agreement. Young people were seen to be especially welcome. Alongside the direct responses on whether Folkstock's values-related messages are being received, analysis of the demographics of the respondents provides indications of the embodiment of the inclusivity values. The age range of the respondents is broad, with the high point of the distribution curve being for the age category 40-49, confirming that Folkstock is indeed welcoming to all ages. However, socio-economic and ethnicity inclusivity was not as evident. The respondents were predominantly white British or Irish, at 94%, a figure which was confirmed as likely by observation at the events. The top two socio-economic classifications are emphasised, with 64% being of professional status. However, the messages of Folkstock's inclusivity values are being decoded by many of the respondents, with 73% agreeing that Folkstock is welcoming to people from all ethnic backgrounds, and 62% judging it to be welcoming to people from all income levels.

Also noteworthy for its slight clashing of receipt of messages is the relatively low level of agreement on the locale-related values. So while 40% of people could not agree that Folkstock was of benefit to local communities, 86% did agree that it was supportive of the local music scene. However, evidence of engagement by the local community is demonstrated by the evidence that 68% of the respondents came from London or 'local' counties, which included Hertfordshire, Bedfordshire, Buckinghamshire and Essex; while 32% were 'non-local', with the furthest travellers coming from Devon and from Wales.

### ***Encoding the messages***

Although web-based Folkstock messages were sent, re-sent and circulated by a wide range of senders, a high proportion of the messages originated from, so could be said to have been encoded by, the Director. She updated the content of the website herself and was responsible for placing status updates on Folkstock's Facebook page. The artist who ran the Foundation's Twitter account in its early days stressed the importance of the Director being at the helm of the account as the communication level became more intense:

TA      I didn't start it from scratch, she already had about 70 or 100 followers or something on it, and what I did I searched for all the people that might be interested in that area and then started following them, and that type of thing and tried to interact with them. But Helen built up relationships with them more. Whereas I didn't do that part of it because I didn't have the detail that she had as it became more and more intense, the Twitter account, it was better that she did it because the relationships that she was building with the people on there, were more obviously known to her than they were known to me.

Analysis of tweets, collected automatically via the Tweet Archivist service, mentioning Folkstock during the month of September shows that, of these 2,263 tweets, 463 (20%) were tweeted by @Folkstock, an account authored by the Director by this point. Of the eighteen Twitter accounts mentioning Folkstock the most during September, fourteen were directly involved in the festival's management or were performers or stall holders, including the Director herself making use of her personal Twitter account. Of the 463 tweets by @Folkstock, 252 (54%) were retweets of tweets originating from other account holders, indicating that the Director was both acknowledging, sanctioning and further encoding, messages authored by other senders.

Analysis of the volume of tweets during September, shows that the Folkstock festival, on September 21<sup>st</sup>, provided a focus for message sending on Twitter, while another high spot may be aligned to the Hertford Corn Exchange event on September 6<sup>th</sup>. September was also a key month for tweeting, with around 50% of the total tweets for 2013 (February to December) occurring during that month.

Pages for both Folkstock Festival and the Folkstock Arts Foundation were set up on Facebook by the Director. Echoing the changing levels of tweets over the month, Facebook Page Insights for Folkstock Festival show that the week beginning 15<sup>th</sup> September 2013, that is the week including the festival, was the ‘most popular week’ in terms of postings, while the most popular age group amongst the 996 followers of the page at the end of 2013 is the category 35-54. For the Folkstock Arts Foundation Facebook page, the ‘most popular week’ was 26<sup>th</sup> May 2013, which coincided with a Church Farm Ardeley Masterclass event ‘Songwriting under the stars’, as well as being the week in which Folkstock Festival tickets were first released.

The Folkstock Director also encoded the Folkstock message by creating performance opportunities, personalised press stories and radio representation for Folkstock artists, along with photos, videos and biographies. This meant that each of the bands became themselves an individual story, or message, under the banner of the Foundation, as the Director explained:

FD        I got all the bands to give me a different quote about what were the benefits to them of being part of the Foundation, so again, personalise it. I mean all the time the stories I put out to the press were just lock, stock and barrel copied and pasted in, which was good, because it means that they were newsworthy and well-researched information and that just saved everybody so much time. I’d get the musicians to give me a quote and then I’d incorporate that.

Examination of the contents of the tweets which mention Folkstock show an emphasis on the tagging of the names of Folkstock bands, while Folkstock’s and the Folkstock Arts Foundation Facebook pages also highlight aspects of music, including Folkstock events and the names of bands or musicians in most of their posts.

The music-related cluster of values appears in the top places in the list of decoded values. In top place lies the aim of Folkstock being ‘supportive to aspiring musicians’. This suggests that this is a value which is being received and understood by the stakeholders or ‘receivers’.

One of the stall-holders confirmed her perception of the community-related values of the Folkstock Foundation:

SH      Community is at the centre of the whole Folkstock initiative. My business became involved because of Helen's support of us and our love of community – she was tremendously supportive of our new fledgling Salon and Spa due to the fact that I had offered to help with her blogging/social media program. It shows how focusing on community expands your opportunities because the more you help people in that way, the more opportunities there are to support each other.

### ***Communication channels***

The Folkstock values were communicated via a range of channels. For the purposes of the questionnaire, drawing on the communications literature, ten possible channels were identified as potentially carrying values-related messages from the sender to a receiver. Multi-dimensional media channels included attendance at a Folkstock event and hearing the music of Folkstock artists. The interpersonal channels of receiving comments from others, included via the artists themselves or via friends or family. The web-based communication channels appearing on the list included both the Folkstock festival website and the Folkstock Arts Foundation website, and the social media of Twitter and Facebook. Some overlap may be possible with these categories, for example, receiving messages from friends or family via a web-based channel such as Facebook.

By the end of 2013, the Folkstock Festival Facebook pages had 996 likes, that is, the potential to directly reach 996 people with their messages, while the Folkstock Arts Foundation page had 235 likes. By the end of 2013, the Folkstock Twitter account had 1,029 followers and was itself following 851 Twitter users. So the Foundation had the potential to send its values-related messages to be directly received by over a thousand people through this channel.

The Folkstock Arts Foundation and separate festival website sat on WordPress platforms. The WordPress platform emphasises regular informal blog-style updating, as well as sub-sections carrying more static background information. The news updates include the option for readers to contribute feedback if they wish. The Director maintained control over the content of both web sites, with all the, approximately monthly, posts being authored by her.

Sitting on a separate website, Folkstock Festival: Musical Notes is a blog commissioned by the Director but under the control of an independent blogger, a recent graduate, Kate, from a local university. Posted at least weekly and more frequently still around the festival date, most blog entries were by Kate herself. However, guest blog entries are also in evidence, and photographs, interviews and videos captured by a team of associate bloggers at the festival gave the blog web site a multi-dimensional feel. Although echoing the festival website in look and feel: the blog was also on a WordPress platform, the home page layout was similar, and the artwork was by the same artist, Kate explained the different nuances in the ways in which the message was being put across via the blog:

K        I think what she wanted from me was a view from a student, so she wanted me to have the freedom to talk about it and to talk about it from, you know, even the good, bad and ugly from a student perspective and I think that's what I did and I enjoyed that I had that freedom as well. I think it gave a different spin. Helen didn't want to set me too many sort of boundaries and rules because it would then risk becoming her take on things rather than mine so I had a lot of freedom, which was fun. I think it was a very carefully constructed message because I mean even though mine came across perhaps as a bit more casual and tongue in cheek, it was always intended, I mean I would never put anything on there that I didn't think about and scrutinize before. I hoped it came across as natural even if behind the scenes it was crafted.

Radio was another media channel used by the Director for the dissemination of messages through giving interviews herself, as well as encouraging the mention of the Folkstock festival when Folkstock artists were played. Radio stations used included internet radio, particularly specialist programming, such as Folk Radio; local radio, such as Radio Dacorum and BBC Three Counties Radio, which would have been interested in Folkstock as a local organisation and event; and mentions on BBC national Radios 1, 2 and 6. Folkstock was featured in local newspapers, such as the Hertfordshire Mercury and the Borehamwood Times: messages offered through these channels could have been seen in the hard copy newspapers themselves, or on their online sites. Online magazines emphasising folk and roots, such as FATEA and Properganda, were other channels which carried the Folkstock message in the form of stories. In another channel overlap, the Folkstock website includes reproduction of the articles, while the Folkstock Soundcloud highlights radio mentions and Soundcloud clips are in turn embedded in blogs and on the Folkstock web site. Twitter and

Facebook links from the Folkstock feeds could also have directed stakeholders to these channels.

The Folkstock YouTube channel was another media used by the Director to spread the message, this channel focusing particularly on showing videos, recorded live in various places, of musicians who had performed at the Folkstock festival. By the end of 2013, Folkstock's YouTube channel had 77 subscribers, that is, people who had specifically registered an interest in the Folkstock YouTube content. 130 videos had been uploaded to the site and over 24,000 viewings of the videos had been made.

Although not provided as options within the questionnaire, other 'unofficial' channels are also in evidence. These include artist websites, where announcements about being signed to perform at the Folkstock festival were made, Pinterest boards set up by four people closely involved with the festival and all featuring 'pins', or images, of artists performing at the festival, postings of images on Instagram, Mixcloud cloudcasts of radio interviews, and YouTube channels set up by Folkstock, as well as by artists and others associated with the festival. These all stress Folkstock's emphasis on music-related values. Postings on Tumblr, particularly announcements by artists of their links to Folkstock, also highlight music. Links from artist websites to their 'homes' on social media sites, or to Twitter as an encouragement to the reader to tweet about the artist and their performance were all noted as diverse options for channels which were spreading the word about Folkstock.

The importance of using visual branding to encode the Folkstock message was mentioned by the Director in her interview. She explained the source of the artwork featured on the web sites, posters and banners, highlighting the importance of using design to emphasise the message.

FD        I saw Amy's work and immediately saw that there was an affinity to what I'd been creating for the festival. So I asked her how she'd feel about being associated with the festival and maybe providing some artwork based on an image I saw on her stand. And she was very enthusiastic and very quickly produced something useful which I've used without any amendments. And we've done different versions of it, different variations, on the theme and we've got lots of lovely artwork and I think it's been really important.



### *Decoding the messages*

Survey participants were asked to decide how they thought they had received the messages about Folkstock's values which had been listed in the earlier question, and were given a list of possibilities (see Figure 3). In top place on the decoding chart are two multi-dimensional modes of communication, emphasising sounds, sights and material objects in physical space. For the first of these, 76% of the respondents claiming that it was attending a Folkstock event which caused them to form their views, while for the second, 64% of respondents suggested that it was hearing the music of the Folkstock artists which was the key.

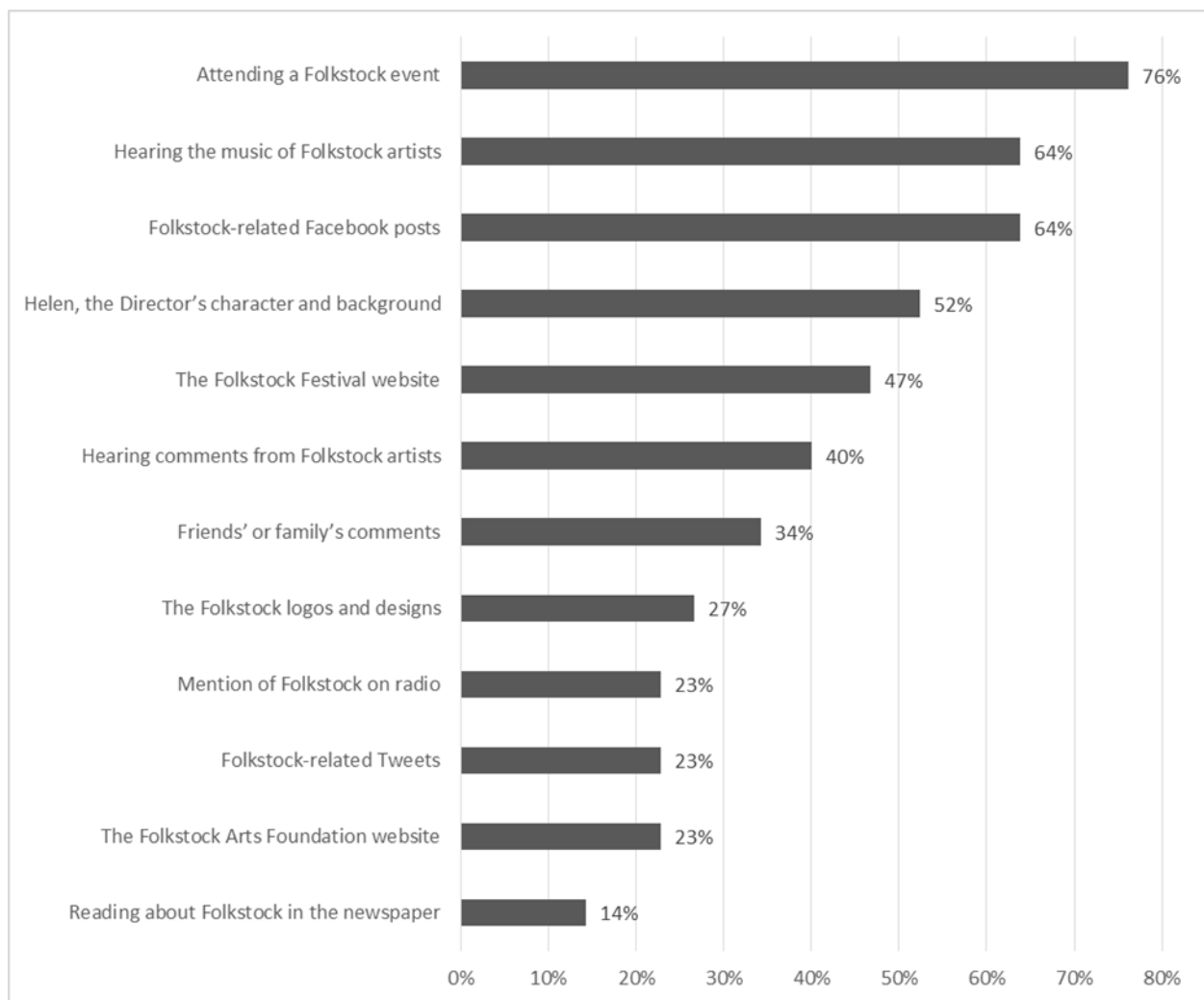


Figure 3. Channels influencing the decoding of Folkstock values (n=105)

The role of Facebook as a message channel comes out strongly, with 64% of respondents claiming this as a cause of opinion formation. It should be noted, however, that 66 of the questionnaires were completed by respondents who followed a link from Facebook. Although

only 23% of respondents were influenced by tweets, this is much higher than the one person who filled in the questionnaire via a Twitter link.

Further evidence of the importance of the role of sounds, sights and material objects in physical space may be found in the comments which survey participants included in the final open question. Several respondents judged that the wide range of acts helped them to develop their appetite for new music, thus fulfilling the communication of one of Folkstock's key values-related aims, as in comment 1:

C1      It's certainly changed my idea of folk music, although I think some of it is more 'new folk' or roots.

Comments relating to inclusivity values (C2-4) were also identified in the answers to the open question, suggesting that these messages were not being wholly successfully delivered.

C2      No disabled access!

C3      Nothing for children to do all day.

C4      My impression is that it caters almost wholly for the younger performer.

Appropriate disabled access was provided at the festival, according to the Director, and older performers were present, but it seems that these messages of inclusivity needed communicating more effectively. However, another commented:

C5      There was something for everybody in it'.

Comments relating to the communication of a 'social feel-good factor' (C6-8) as professed in Folkstock's aims, suggested that these affective messages were received at the festival itself:

C6      The atmosphere created a "love and peace" feeling.

C7      Wonderful vibe especially in the evening.

C8      Friendly atmosphere bringing people together.

Another comment (C9) also highlights the affective values of Folkstock, whilst emphasising that the message about the local angle had been received:

C9      Folkstock has been an inspiring and brilliant showcase of local talent.

### ***Feedback***

The final element in Kotler *et al.*'s communication model is that of feedback directed back to the source. As has been demonstrated in this study of Folkstock communications, there is substantial opportunity for feedback via many of the channels in use, particularly the online channels. 69% of the survey respondents had made comments about Folkstock, with the channel showing the highest interaction being Facebook, at 60%. Feedback had also been given on Twitter by 14% of the respondents.

Inspection of the Folkstock websites found that very few comments had been added, however, with the few who did make online comments being potential stall holders or performers. Retweets of either Folkstock or other people's comments on Twitter demonstrates engagement by stakeholders. The Folkstock YouTube videos appeared to attract some feedback too, although usually no more than three or four comments per video. Fifty-nine (publicly available) postings of photographs tagged with Folkstock were found on Instagram and several of these generated up to 11 'likes', while ten postings were made via the blogging site, Tumblr, again emphasising the music by showing Folkstock performers. Of the Tumblr postings, only one had gained a 'like', this one cross-posted from Instagram.

More difficult to identify and quantify is the feedback which does not find its way back to the original sender: that is to the Folkstock Director, but rather circulates in its original form to other receivers, or results in a modifying of the message itself and then its recirculation. Messages were also encoded and transmitted, for example via Twitter, by commentators, other than the Director, thus generating their own feedback loops.

### ***Noise***

Although over a thousand people were following Folkstock on Twitter at the time, on closer inspection many of these are spam-type followers or wanting to promote their own interests. These could be said to be creating 'noise' which interferes with the transmission of the encoded message. Although Facebook is used and understood by millions of people in the UK and beyond, other 'noise' is the barrier which is encountered by potential receivers who are not social media users. Although setting up the Facebook sites as a 'page' eliminates spamming within the main postings of the site, there is still the potential for these to appear on the web version in the 'Recent Posts by Others' section.

## **Discussion**

The findings of this study demonstrate the usefulness of the communications model framework. It was possible to use the model to show that the values-related messages of the Folkstock Foundation were being transmitted through a range of channels and were being successfully decoded by stakeholders. Messages relating to the music-orientated values cluster dominate the transmissions, with 92% of the respondents agreeing that the Foundation is supportive to aspiring musicians. It is also the cluster about which most stakeholder feedback is visible. Messages relating to inclusivity were also being received by over 70% of the stakeholders.

The importance of the role of Folkstock events in transmitting messages about values is demonstrated by its prime position as the top channel via which stakeholders judged that they were receiving information about the values of the Foundation. This finding confirms the views of Moeran and Pedersen (2011) and Woosnam (2009) and highlights the importance of Finkel's (2010) warning that an organisation's values need to be demonstrated at events. An event gives an organisation the opportunity to convey its values to stakeholders in multi-sensory modes, including, in particular, sounds and sights. The sounds may be the music of the performers, the announcements made by the compères and artists, and the general chit-chat exchanged with friends, family, and other visitors, as well as overheard conversation. The sights include taking note of the demographics of the event attendees and performers, awareness of the branding artwork on display, and the layout of the facilities. The sense of atmosphere at an event, which is created by a mixture of sounds, sights, taste, smell, and interpersonal activity, can also facilitate the effective decoding of the message by making the potential receivers more open to receipt of the message. Equally, events can also destroy and distort messages if they are not planned with the values in mind.

Key message senders, such as the Director of the Foundation, may be particularly visible at an event, and can take the chance to embody and transmit values via personal branding. The Director of the Foundation studied here scores highly as a source via which respondents judge that they have received information about the Foundation's values. This finding highlights the importance of personal influence and personal branding on the communications process, as identified by Severin and Tankard (1997) and Kottasz and Bennett (2014).

It should also be remembered that the messages which are in evidence at an event may also be transmitted beyond the stakeholders who are attending on the day, through the channels of social media and post-event word of mouth. These may also find their way back to the senders as feedback. The demonstrable peaks in social media mentions of Folkstock at the times that events were taking place reinforce the importance of ensuring that the values are being effectively transmitted during an event.

The high scoring of Facebook as a channel demonstrated the dominance of new media over the more traditional media of newspapers and radio and is in line with Lovejoy and Saxton's (2012) analysis of the importance of the new paradigms of engagement by nonprofits, which social media has engendered. Facebook was more popular than Twitter as a decoded channel, perhaps due to Facebook's relative ease of use: the technological barriers perceived by some stakeholders may be identified as 'noise' which obstructs the communications process. It may also be that, as Guo and Saxton (2014) suggest, Twitter is not a particularly useful tool for conveying mission-level messages, such as values. The use of photographs and video clips on the websites and on Facebook, YouTube and Twitter ensured that sights as well as words were used to communicate values via social media, continuing the multi-sensory conveyance of the message. Both Twitter and Facebook enable feedback to be posted from receivers of the messages, and this may also be further facilitated by the original message senders. The interactive nature of Twitter in particular was used by the senders to re-transmit and reinforce messages, partly through direct response or signifying approval and partly through signalling inclusiveness and openness through the active use of the channel. Also signalling inclusivity was the delegation of the authoring of the Folkstock blog to a recent graduate and her subsequent invitations to guest bloggers.

The importance of tailored websites, which give stakeholders a practical reason to access them, is also demonstrated by the higher showing, as a channel, of the festival website over the Foundation's website. This also reinforces Smith's (2008) finding that event attendees like specific information about an event: in 2008 this was conveyed via a printed programme; in 2013 it is more likely to be via a website. Messages may also be sent through the choice of website platforms: the platform chosen by Folkstock emphasises openness to contributions, thus demonstrating the values of inclusivity.

## Conclusions

This paper tests the classic transmission model of the communication process by looking at the ways in which a nonprofit arts organisation, the Folkstock Arts Foundation communicated its professed values to stakeholders. Consideration of the transmission model frames the study: the message and its media platform, its encoding and decoding and the feedback loop are all examined. The new knowledge gained from analysis of the case study suggests that three modifications are needed to ensure that the communications model is relevant to the transmission of values in today's nonprofit arts sector (see Figure 4).

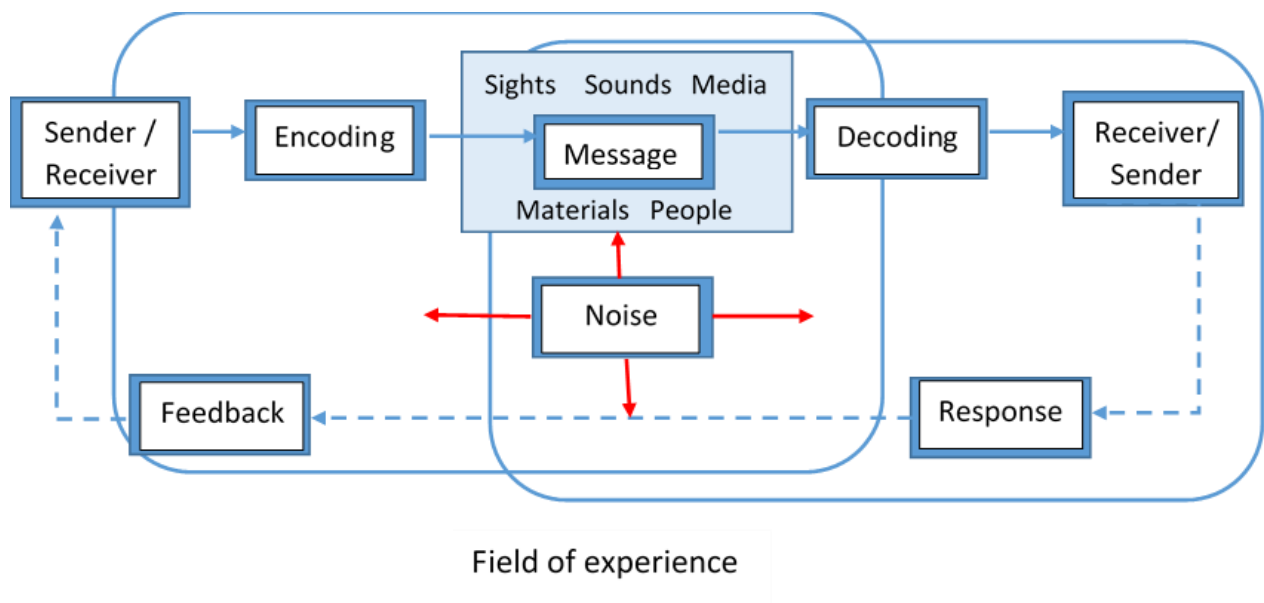


Figure 4: Elements in the values communication process within the nonprofit arts sector

The Shannon and Weaver (1949) model of the communications process, in its modified form by Kotler *et al.* (2013), was found to be a useful starting point within the nonprofit arts context. The message, in this case the organisation's values, was found to be still a key element within the process. The addition of the feedback loop is particularly necessary in today's social media-rich world, where communication from the consumer is prevalent. Therefore it is suggested that within the revised model both sender and receiver feature as encoders and decoders, in order to emphasise that values-related messages may be initiated more easily by the stakeholder and then responded to by the organisation.

Hall's (1980) suggestion that the degree of symmetry between the encoding and decoding ends of the process is dependent upon both sender and receiver operating within the same social context is also still worthy of highlight. In order to emphasise this, as well as to build

on the above suggested change, a centrally-placed 'Field of experience' label replaces the former division into a 'Sender's field of experience' and a 'Receiver's field of experience'.

It was found that the multi-sensory opportunities offered by an event are the key channel by which values-related messages can be transmitted. Face-to-face and embodied channels were also found to be important. Web-based channels were found to effectively transmit message content, but also to signify values through the ways in which their use was facilitated by the message senders and through the choice of platform employed. Therefore a third change is suggested: the 'media' via which the message is transmitted is extended to acknowledge the important channels of sights, sounds, materials, and people.

This study concludes that it is vital that nonprofit arts organisations understand how to make effective use of the communications process in order to transmit messages effectively about the organisation's values and thus contribute to the branding of the organisation. These organisations should take advantage of channels beyond traditional media, including those which are multi-sensory. They should be aware that they are communicating within a particular field of experience and make the most of the receptive receivers within that context. They should take note that as well as sending out messages from the organisation, it is important to respond to stakeholders' communications, although not necessarily to be diverted by these from their firmly-held organisational values. A determination by an organisation to uphold an uplifting range of values, such as those which were found to be transmitted by Folkstock, can also be said to impact upon society by contributing to a better quality of life. Finally, a nonprofit arts organisation needs to remember that the values it professes are a vital bedrock on how its brand is communicated to its stakeholder and should be firmly planted and upheld.

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